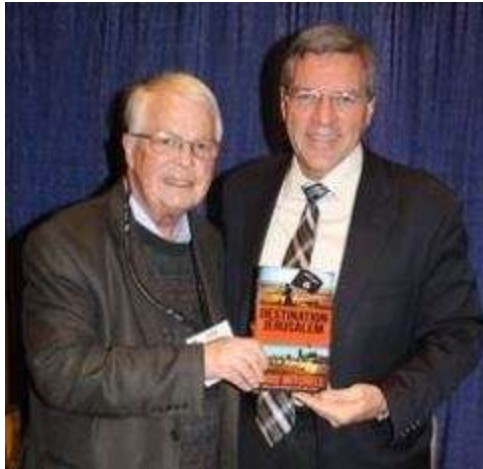


**By Dan Wooding, Founder of ASSIST Ministries and the ASSIST News Service**



**NASHVILLE, TN (ANS – June 7, 2015)** – For many years, Chris Mitchell, the CBN News Middle East Bureau Chief based in Jerusalem, has had a front seat to history in the Middle East, especially reporting on the terrifying growth of Islamic terror groups in the region, particularly in Iraq and Syria.

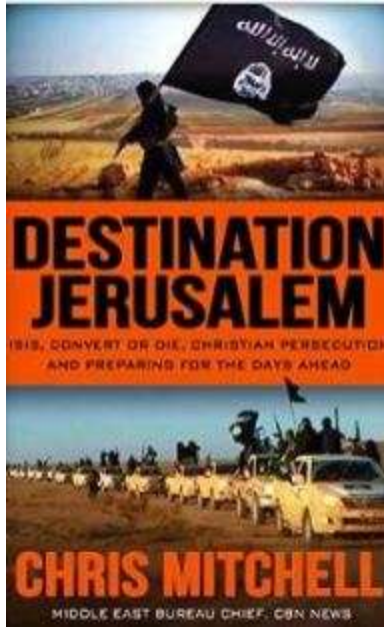
And now, Mitchell is sharing much of what he has learned in his fascinating new book called “DESTINATION JERUSALEM: ISIS, Convert or Die, Christian Persecution and Preparing for the Days Ahead” (C & L Publishing LLC), which brings little-known facts about the ISIS, also called Islamic State (IS) terror group, as well as other momentous events in his troubled region.

I recently sat down with Chris Mitchell at the NRB 2015 conference in Nashville, Tennessee, and I began by asking him how he began working for CBN News, and he replied, “I started back in 2000 when I was there after what’s called the ‘Second Intifada’ [the Palestinian uprising against Israel] began in September of 2000.

“I’ve now been with CBN for about 26 years and for the last 15 years, or so, it’s been quite an adventure being in the Middle East and covering things like the rise of ISIS, Christian persecution, and all the changes that have been going on for the last several years.”

I shared with Chris that I had once spent two weeks in Northern Iraq and consequently was interested to learn where ISIS came from. He explained, “You have to go back all the way to the beginnings of Islam and trace their origins. But more recently they have come from (AQI), or al-Qaeda in Iraq”.

The group, he said, was founded in 1999 by the Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi under the name Jama’at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, but Zarqawi was killed in a targeted killing by a Joint US force on June 7, 2006, while attending a meeting in an isolated safe house approximately 5 miles north of Baqubah.



“A couple of other leaders took over from him and they too were killed, and then it became ISIS, also known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. [The Levant is the historic name given to the entire region east of the Mediterranean from Egypt, east to Iran and to Turkey].

“They were ruthless and when they first hit the world headlines back in June of 2014 when they took over Mosul which is ancient Nineveh where the prophet Jonah was a few thousand years ago.

“So now they were on the world stage, posing a threat to the stability in the region. They have established a Calafate, which is sort of an Islamic empire ruled by Sharia Law. That has been a dream for Muslims for years since the last Calafate was abolished

in 1924, and that’s captured the imagination of Muslims around the world that have pledged allegiance to ISIS.”

I then asked Mitchell what kind of Sharia Law they were now carrying out, and he replied, “Well, just that for example, a thief would have their hands cut off, and an adulterer would be stoned to death. Even for minor infractions like smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol, they hand out some horrific punishments. Just recently there were 13 young boys all executed for watching a soccer match. These are the sort of things that are hard to imagine that any civilized person would even contemplate.

“We also saw the burning of a Jordanian pilot alive, and the beheading of 21 Christian Copts. So this is the kind of brutality and barbarism that ISIS is doing, not only to people that have the ill-fortune of being captured by them, but the people that are right now under their sway of influence.

“There’s perhaps 8 to 12 million people who are living under the governance of ISIS. One thing that a lot of people are concerned about is the fact that foreign fighters are going to these areas and fighting with them. But another danger is the fact that there’s a whole generation of children that are being raised in this kind of brutal Islam.”

Why are teenagers now joining the terror group?

“Apparently,” he said, “some get radicalized by being exposed to ISIS and their ideology on the Internet and they probably have an affinity for Islam the religion. So they feel like they’re fulfilling the

will of Allah. That is what they're doing, even killing people in the name of God, believe that is is something that Allah wills. So that's attracting them.



“This ideology, in many ways is spreading through the technology that we have today through the Internet. Some actually go there physically and typically they first of travel to Turkey and then cross over the border. I saw a story just a few days ago about three British young teenagers going to join ISIS. So it's an attraction for many people for whatever reason; and it just seems like this in effect demonic ideology is attracting people from all over the

world.”

I wondered if, because of his high-profile position with CBN News, he had received any death threats from the group, and Mitchell replied, “Not from ISIS. However, we were very close to them last June when we went to Northern Iraq after they had taken over Mosul, we went again in August and they'd taken over even more Christian territory.

“We were close to them -- about a kilometer away according to one of the policemen that we interviewed. So no they haven't threatened me directly but I think anybody that's going to have the misfortune of getting into their hands would have an expected fate.”

Now that the book was out and on sale, I asked Mitchell to share how it came about, and he said, “The idea behind it was that I had experienced what I felt was the privilege of meeting many of the people, including Christians, who had suffered at the hands of ISIS, and I wanted to share their stories. Also, I had met some of the Yazidi people, an ethnic group in Northern Iraq that had been expelled from their city, Sinjar, and then went up to Mount Sinjar where they were trapped; many for weeks. Some of them died of exposure with lack of food and water.

“We interviewed one mother who actually had a cap full of medicine and a cap full of water that she would give her children on the hour just to keep them alive. We talked to another lady who'd just lost her son because he'd gone back off the mountain into the village to try and get some food. He was captured by ISIS and beheaded. We also talked to a number of Christians who were given four choices. They could either leave their homes where they had lived in for years. They could pay the Jizya tax, which is the Islamic tax for non-believers. The third thing they could do was convert

become a Muslim by saying the Islamic creed in the presence of two witnesses. The fourth choice that they had they could die. Given those choices obviously most of them left. So I had the opportunity to meet a number of these Christian refugees and felt responsible to come back and tell their story.”

Chris Mitchell then said that the book had three reasons:

- \* First of all to warn about ISIS and tell what their goals are.
- \* The second is to tell people in the West about the Christian persecution going on in Northern Iraq and throughout the Middle East.
- \* And the third thing is to help people prepare for the days ahead.



He added, “These are dark and difficult days and it’s almost seems like the scripture men’s hearts are failing them for fear; and that’s part of the strategy and the goal of ISIS is to strike terror into the non-believers”.

He went onto to say that the Middle East is becoming “even more dangerous” for many of the people who live there. “Especially with ISIS,” he said. “The so called Arab Spring in 2011 brought the promise of democracy, but it really has brought radical Islam like never before.

“Countries like Libya have really disintegrated as a nation, and Iraq is much more dangerous than it had been for some time. There’s also the Iran nuclear threat that continues, so I think that all over all the Middle East it has become a much more dangerous volatile place.”

Does he ever get depressed with his reporting work, covering so much horror that is taking place in the region?

“That’s a good question,” he said. “However, if you feel like you’re called, then the Lord gives you grace for that particular calling. It is sometimes depressing to see the plight of so many of the people. I can remember being in the Yazidi tents of the refugee camps and for example with this mother whose son had been beheaded – his name ironically in English means ‘God Giveth – and that can be overwhelming, especially to see the number of people that have lives displaced, and many times destroyed.

“But I do feel that it was an opportunity to and a real privilege to tell their stories so people can pray, and also learn more about what they’re going through perhaps give to an organization working there. For instance, CBN International is helping out and Samaritan’s Purse is there also. There are a number of different organizations that are doing what they can. The churches there are also helping and have taken in many of the refugees into their buildings and facilities, and so in the midst of the suffering, there are encouraging things.”

What does he hope people will get from the book?

“I just hope they will benefit by it and learn what their brothers and sisters and going through and the dangers they face. Also, finally they can prepare for the days ahead. We live in a dark time in history. But I think that there’s two authors that I cite about what kind of times we live in. The first one is Charles Dickens from ‘A Tale of Two Cities’, in which he said it was ‘the best of times; it was the worst of times’. And Isaiah who said, ‘Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you’.

“The deep darkness of peoples I think will see great light and great darkness during these times. And I think it’s important that we be prepared for the days ahead.”

Mitchell says that hopes that people who read the book will, first all, pray, adding, “I hope they’ll pray for their brothers and sisters in Iraq and Syria for instance, and also not be passive onlookers of the times that we live, but be active participants.

“The second thing you can do is give perhaps to organizations that are helping some of these Christians in the Middle East, and also raise their voice on behalf of those who are suffering for their faith. Whatever God’s called you to do, we will all, one day, stand before the Lord and He’ll say hopefully, ‘Well done good and faithful servants’. We need to step into the destiny; that’s what God has called us to.

“There’s one quote in the book from Winston Churchill, who on the eve of the Battle of Britain made a terrific speech to his countrymen to rally them. He said at the end of it, ‘Let us brace ourselves to our duties that one day men can say, this indeed was their finest hour.’”

To find out more about the book, please go to <http://destinationjerusalembook.com/>, or you can also buy it on Internet sites like [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

You can hear by Front Page Radio interview with Chris Mitchell by going to <http://oldassistnews.net/frontpageradiofiles/FPR20150524ChrisMitchellMono.mp3>

Photo captions: 1) Dan Wooding with Chris Mitchell and his book. 2) Book cover. 3) A Yazidi woman being carried to safety from ISIS. 4) ISIS fighters. 5) Dan Wooding in Erbil, Northern Iraq.

Note: I would like to thank Robin Frost for transcribing this interview.



**About the writer: Dan Wooding, 74, is an award-winning journalist who was born in Nigeria of British missionary parents, now living in Southern California with his wife Norma, to whom he has been married for nearly 52 years. They have two sons, Andrew and Peter, and six grandchildren who all live in the UK. He is the author of 45 books and founder and international director of ASSIST (Aid to Special Saints in Strategic Times) and the ASSIST News Service (ANS). Dan hosts the weekly “Front Page Radio” show on the KWVE Radio Network in Southern California and which is also carried throughout the United States and around the world, and also “His Channel Live,” a TV show beamed to 192 countries. He has reported for the ASSIST News Service from Northern Iraq, spending two weeks traveling around the region.**

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